

Did you know that the [No Child Left Behind](#) law requires local high schools to divulge your child's personal information to military recruiters?

My constituents brought this matter to my attention in 2005. Many parents expressed frustration that their children were persistently being contacted at home by military recruiters. They wanted to know how the military gained access to their personal contact information without their consent.

The [Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization](#) of 2001, the so-called “No Child Left Behind” Act, included a provision that requires school districts to give military recruiters the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of students, unless their parents “opt-out” of the list. This personal information about minors is used by the Department of Defense (DoD) in a massive recruiting database.

I have the greatest respect for Americans who choose to enter the military, as well as for those in the armed forces who engage in the recruiting process. Those efforts, however, should respect the privacy rights of students and their families.

Schools should not be sharing children's personal information with the military. I am glad to note a recent victory for students' civil liberties in which the New York Civil Liberties Union settled a lawsuit against the Department of Defense (DoD). The DoD agreed to stop collecting student Social Security numbers, to stop sharing the database of student information with other agencies, and to make it easier for students to be removed from the database. The DoD has yet to fully implement the conditions of the settlement.

As a policy-maker and former high school teacher and principal, I am concerned with rights of parents to know who contacts their children. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis defined privacy as “the right to be left alone.” Families are not being left alone, and their personal, private information is being divulged without their knowledge.

Under [guidance from the U.S. Department of Education](#), schools are only required to provide a single notice informing parents about the recruiting provision. Most parents are unaware of the

opt-out requirement. Among the daily deluge of mailings and many responsibilities of tending to school-age children, an obscure administrative form like an opt-out card is easy to overlook.. Moreover, cultural and language barriers can prevent understanding of the opt-out process, especially in immigrant communities that are subject to aggressive military recruiting. If parents do not respond, and do not explicitly object to having their child's personal information released to recruiters, it is assumed that they have no objections. They must "opt-out" in order to protect their rights.

This is backward. Rather, parents and their children should automatically receive privacy protection for students' confidential information, and recruiters should have to wait for explicit consent before they have access to these records. They should, instead, be allowed to "opt-in" if they wish.

In 2005, in order to restore the privacy rights of parents and students, I introduced the [Student Privacy Protection Act](#)

. Despite the support of 75 cosponsors, Republicans in the House of Representatives prevented this bill from coming before the House for a vote.

I am pleased to [announce](#) that today, I introduced The Student Privacy Protection Act of 2007. This bill is the same as the bill from 2005, and is already gathering strong support. The National Education Association, representing 3 million teachers across the nation, has committed to support this bill, as has the National Parent-Teacher Association. In addition, a strong grassroots movement called [Leave My Child Alone](#) has allowed tens of thousands of Americans to become "[citizen-cosponsors](#)" of the Student Privacy Protection Act.

The Student Privacy Protection Act of 2007 will change the military recruitment provision of No Child Left Behind from an "opt-out" system to "opt-in." With citizens working in cooperation with my work in Congress, I look forward to seeing this bill finally become law.